SECRET

RP
WWS
ER
WA
HMH

410.38

CA - Mr. Clubb

May 17, 1951

CA - Mr. Johnson

Air Attache Report Regarding Morale of Chinese Nationalist Air Force

Attached is a very interesting and reasonably objective report by Assistant Air Attache Luckey, regarding morale in the Chinese Nationalist Air Force. While living conditions, and consequently morale, are good under existing circumstances, Luckey's report raises some important questions regarding the reliability of CNAF personnel under combat conditions - in the event of an attempted assault on the mainland.

Discussing the attitude of CNAF troops regarding a return to their mainland homes, Luckey states that this is the "overwhelming consideration" of all Chinese troops, but continues as follows: "One high ranking Nationalist Commander stated that, if a large scale landing on the mainland occurred, a large portion (percentage unspecified) of troops would desert and return home. This view is considered extreme, though of consequence in future planning vis-a-vis the Nationalists".

Luckey's comments regarding the degree of pride which CNAF personnel may take in the past accomplishments of their service are, in my estimation, a bit wide of the mark. Luckey states that in contrast to the other branches of the Chinese military establishment the Air Force is not generally identified with the crushing Nationalist defeat on the mainland, since the main body of Air Force strength was removed to Formosa before much Communist air opposition was encountered. As a result, leadership ability within the CNAF has not yet been subject to critical examination. It may well be that few officers of the CNAF have had their records blemished by poor combat operations. Nonetheless the CNAF as a whole should, I should think, be given a low combat rating on the basis of its past record. The fact remains that the Nationalists were unwilling to commit Air Force units to combat once the Chinese Communist air force became a potential threat, either because defections were feared, or because Nationalist leaders had a low estimation of the ability of the Air Force to survive in combat. According to General Barr the few sorties that were flown afford little basis for optimism as to the capability of the Air Force - here again the top Air Force brass (or the pilots themselves) appeared unwilling to risk the loss of aircraft and pilots, and raids were often conducted at ridiculously high levels with very poor results over targets.

Commenting on the restiveness of the CNAF under the President's June 27 "neutralization" order, Luckey points out that prior to the assignment of the Seventh Fleet to the Formosa Strait "defeatism extended through the Nationalist forces from top to bottom", due in part to the humiliating losses of Hainan Island and the Chusans. With the arrival of the Seventh Fleet:

SECRET

"Nationalist

"Nationalist military morale...rose since increased military aid, advice and committments were a foregone conclusion. The visit of General of the Army MacArthur on 31 July was a happy climax to the fondest of hopes. Not long after General MacArthur's visit, a military force little noted for it's aggressiveness, boldness of plans or common military sense suddenly began to complain of lack of opportunity to retaliate against the Chinese Communists on the mainland, this complaint being directed against President Truman's statement which, in effect, attempted to enforce a temporary neutrality. Air Force personnel who previously neglected to order fighter sweeps on Chinese Communist airfields which were gradually being reinforced with fighters capable of attacking Formosan airfields, suddenly got the urge to fly to the mainland and attack the enemy. Of course, the statement of 27 June prevented any such undertaking. It is still a matter for conjecture that, if the cross-channel ban were removed, such an undertaking would be tried even now. Morale, though fairly good, is, unfortunately, propped up mainly by promises of United States aid, advice and committments. With few exceptions, and those notable, it is generally agreed that if the promises of American aid were removed, military and civilian morale would sink to it's pre-June 27 level."

This line of reasoning should be kept in mind as background for evaluating boastful Nationalist claims regarding mainland invasion capabilities. Secure behind the Seventh Fleet and aware that present US policy prohibits offensive action, Nationalist military commanders whose past behavior was anything but aggressive can now fret and fume about enforced inaction and broadcast what they could do against the Communists "if". Luckey concedes that it "is still a matter for conjecture" whether or not our horse would simply sit down if unleashed (as a recent Washington Post cartoon expressed it).

Perhaps because he fears that, in an effort to be objective and frank, he has been too unkind to the GNAF, Luckey concludes with the following comment:

"/.....This question (discussed in the foregoing paragraph) is one of the major issues in any question of US policy vis-a-vis the Chinese Nationalists. None of the statements contained therein should be construed to indicate a lack of confidence in the ability of Chinese Nationalist forces to prove themselves an excellent fighting team. A vigorous and almost ruthless system of training and supervision, similar to that practiced in all good military forces of the world, coupled with modern equipment should make the Chinese Nationalists a terrifically effective ally.

Present

Present family and political influences, which must share a large part of the blame for defeat in the past, if not possible of complete extirpation, must be minimized."

Note that even here Luckey indicated that "vigorous and almost ruthless" training and supervision (in addition to material aid) will be required, and that important family and political influences in the armed services must be minimized, "if not possible of complete extirpation".

Attachment

FE:CA:RE Johnson:mc